

# Veganism as a Lifestyle Choice: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Vegans in the UK

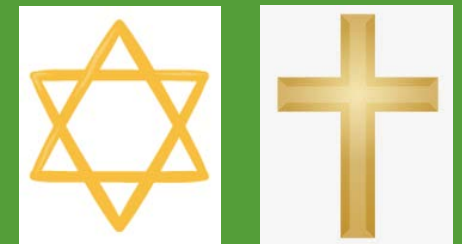
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# Rationale

Veganism is growing exponentially - Estimates range between 600,000 [1] and 3.5 million [2] vegans in the UK

Religion is still relevant – Estimates suggest up to 2/3 of the population of England [3] identify with one of the Abrahamic religions

**Veganism within religious and ethnic groups is very much absent from the academic literature**



[1] The Vegan Society (2022) 'Worldwide Growth of Veganism'. Available at: <https://www.vegansociety.com/news/media/statistics/worldwide>

[2] Petter, O. (2018) 'Number of vegans in UK soars to 3.5 million, survey finds', Independent, 3 April. Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/food-and-drink/vegans-uk-rise-popularity-plant-based-diets-veganism-figures-survey-compare-the-market-a8286471.html>

[3] Office for National Statistics (2020) 'Exploring religion in England and Wales: February 2020'. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/religion/articles/exploringreligioninenglandandwales/february2020>

# Rationale

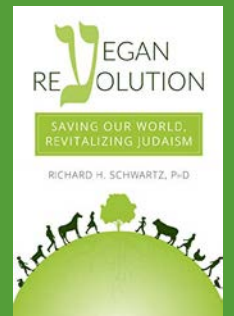
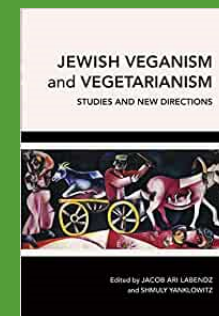
## Judaism and Veganism:

Various organisations advocating veganism

Various activists, rabbis, and authors advocating veganism

In 2017 70+ rabbis called on Jews to adopt veganism

World's first Jewish Vegan Centre opened in London in 2019



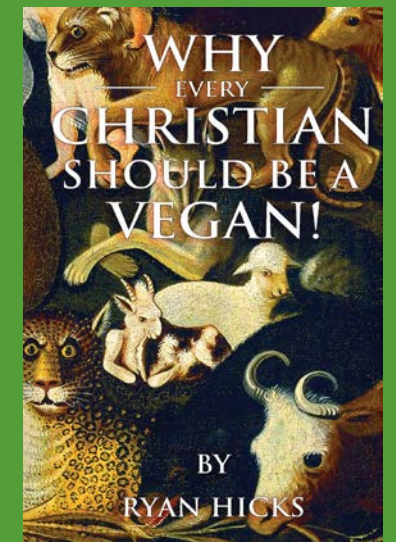
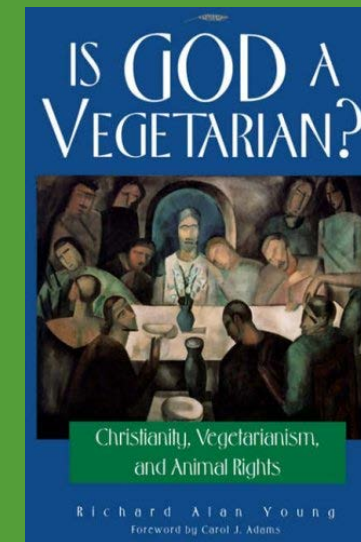
# Rationale

## Christianity and Veganism:

Various organisations advocating veganism

Growing concern where animal welfare is concerned

Books exploring related topics, some by scholars, some by activists



# Rationale

## Islam and Veganism:

Numerous online communities and activists

Organisations emerging advocating veganism in Islam

A documentary in production exploring Muslim vegans



# Theoretical Framework

**Context: Late Modernity and Britain – Giddens, Beck, Bauman**

Individualization

Detraditionalization

Reflexivity and reflexive modernization

**Theory: Reflexivity and Religiosity in Britain**

Religious individualization - Beck

Reflexive habitus - Sweetman

Reflexive religiosity - Mouzelis



# Research Questions

What does the vegan experience look like for Jewish, Christian, and Muslim vegans?

How do religious and cultural beliefs, values, and practices shape one's vegan experience?

How are Jewish, Christian, and Muslim vegans reshaping and redefining what it means to be Jewish, Christian, or Muslim through veganism in late modern Britain?

# Methodology

36 participants (12 of each religion)

- Identify as Jewish/ Christian/ Muslim
- Identify as vegan
- Aged 18+
- Live in the UK and have done so for 5+ years



Non-probability purposive sampling, convenience sampling, and snowball sampling - Recruited via Facebook groups, social media posts and a few referrals from others



# Methodology

## Multiple qualitative methods:

- 36 semi-structured interviews: 40 mins – 2 hours 25 mins (av. 1 hr 30)
- 3 WhatsApp diary groups spanning 3-4 months
- 6 Virtual Participant Observations: cooking demonstrations and kitchen tours

All transcribed and coded  
Thematic analysis



# Preliminary Findings - Ethics

- Main motivations – ethics, treatment of animals and environmentalism
- Emphasis on ethics – many drew on religious ethical arguments
- Veganism complements and aligns with religious ethical teachings and is often a means of following religious dietary injunctions
- All participants connected veganism to their religion, with many explaining that for them, veganism was one way in which they carried out religious requirements/ recommendations



# Preliminary Findings - Reflexivity

- Reflexive religiosity was evident across all participants
- Participants undergo a process of reflexivity, personal reflection, and research involving a wide range of resources when evaluating and coming to a decision
- Common response – I ask myself, would I be happy if this was done to me?
- They don't only follow the juristic side of religion, they emphasised ethics and morals as being something very important to them, which they feel is neglected in religious discourse nowadays



# Preliminary Findings - Experience

- Majority of participants actively practiced their religions, so the assumption that religious vegans are more secular is false
- Most of my participants had a very individual and somewhat isolated vegan experience, rarely engaging with the wider vegan community
- Many enjoyed attending vegan events (but not for socialising purposes), whilst some chose to avoid them (“too many vegans”)
- The vegan label often trumped religious labels – as long as it’s vegan, I don’t need to look for a kosher/halal label too
- Veganising recipes/rituals is very important for maintaining cultural and ritual practices



# Preliminary Findings - Activism

- Not a main focus of my research but it was touched upon in all of the interviews
- Mixed views towards activism
- Many only supported forms of activism focusing on raising awareness/ education in a gentler way
- Low-level forms of activism common – sharing veganism with family and friends but beyond that participation in activism was less common
- Many drew on religious arguments for not participating in activism – we shouldn't proselytise, we shouldn't judge our neighbour
- Many negative perceptions and criticisms of activism





**Thank you!**

**Any questions?**

